

MINUTES OF THE KINGSDON BI-MONTHLY MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 9th JANUARY 2014 IN THE VILLAGE HALL AT 7.00pm

Present: Mr. A Masters (Chairman); Mrs. A Saunders (Vice-Chairman); D. Morris, M. Clode (Parish Councillors); David Huxtable (County Councillor); Mr D. Ruddle (County Councillor); Mrs. K Hatt (Parish Clerk) plus 58 parishioners.

1. Apologies: Mr. J. Calvert (District Councillor)

T.Masters announced that E.Owen has resigned. The parish council received a resignation letter from her of which they do not agree with all the points. The council will respond to the matter – (please see attached Parish Council Statement at the end of the minutes.)

2. Declarations of Interest: None

3. Legal Policies:

The parish council have recently put into place and updated the following policies/documents: Code of conduct, Financial regulations, Standing orders and Freedom of information. These documents are available from the clerk and will be on the website.

It was proposed by D. Morris to formally adopt these policies/documents, seconded by M.Clode. All were in favour.

4. Minutes:

The minutes having been previously circulated were approved and agreed.

5. Kingsdon Community Centre and Sports Field:

5.1 David Huxtable and the former primary school field:

T. Masters introduced David Huxtable who joined us this evening to explain the current situation with the former primary school field and take question/concerns/views from the parishioners.

D. Huxtable began by saying - No decisions have been made yet. Kingsdon currently has a redundant school building and school field. As they are not next to each other the council don't need permission from the secretary of state to build on the field. The school currently has a short tenancy to see if the shop will work. But the SCC haven't given this building away.

This leaves us with the issue of the field. At the moment SCC have approached SSDC to see if they are interested in using it to build low cost housing on. If they are not interested, they will then look to sale it.

The parishioners then had the chance to ask questions and make comments. Below is the points raised/asked and the answers given. (Parishioners words in bold italics.) (D.Huxtable's complete answers have been written which does show many were not answered fully.)

The letter said you were keen to use the field for all the community. What benefits are there to the community of low cost housing? We have potential 50 more cars in the Manor development – roads and infrastructure will not support this? The school has been closed for several years. How much has the SCC forsaking?

£300,000 cost to the council. Redundant properties are not of benefit to the council.

What do the council mean by low cost housing? Low cost housing has to be low cost? How many houses?

The district council will deal with this. They will say if it is viable. Typically 6-10 houses. It is outside the development area.

D. Ruddle, how can you have an assumption this is what the village needs? Surely it is for us to decide what is for the benefit of Kingsdon. Why should we have to choose the school or field? Establish what the residents do want.

Low cost housing is an issue – communities will raise for and against. The SSDC have to prove there is a need. The SCC owns two pieces of land and has to work out the best way of serving the whole of Somerset. They would have preferred to sell the school and move on.

How much do you want for it? We have not been getting replies.

No Comment

D. Huxtable said he doesn't know what the needs of the village are. We haven't given an overall strategy for the village. It is still very much up for grabs. Sport England have been very clear when I've spoken to them that they have never known a case where a sport field has gone. We do need to have a

village strategy – a working party, of shop, councillor and independent people. We Kingsdon need to take a step forward and decide what we want.

No Comment

Can you explain what affordable housing means to a village?

Need all types of houses to keep a school open but we are now past this. If you want new blood in the village you need a range.

When ownership of field was transferred to SCC were any conditions made?

Don't know.

What benefits are there? Who says this is what we need?

If there isn't a local need no low cost housing will be built. There is lots of consultation to happen. I have to manage all of the assets, there are two in the village, we have lent you one, the school. We want a capital receipt for the field. People who live near may want to club together to buy it.

The South Somerset agent for sport England has said it cannot just be sold?

No Comment

Is there a time scale? When do you want to get rid of the assets?

Nothing moves very quickly. The next financial year.

When you build – you firstly build on brown field. Surely green field should be last to build on.

You couldn't get low cost housing on the school.

The reason SCC want the school to have the trial is so it can tick one of your boxes.

The SCC are not the planning authority.

You have made it clear that your position is land owner – if need for low cost housing – why should it go on your land and not somebody else's. This is the only open space land we have. All the others are leased, we do not have them permanently. We have always used this field – it is one of our assets for recreational space. Optimum monetary use for you is to build on it.

There are rules and regulations about social housing. Other land owners may come forward and offer theirs.

You say the village needs low cost housing. Do you perceive that the village needs open space, allotments, orchards? How have you assessed our need for low cost housing?

I am here to listen to all needs? It comes down to who is running the low cost housing at SSDC.

Will all the field be taken?

It is not in my knowledge.

Is not part of the problem communication, mainly on your end? Localism – everything is considered with the local people. It would have helped if you hadn't gone straight to SSDC. We are pushed aside. You are here to listen to localism – talk to us before SSDC.

If SSDC do not see a need, then it can be put aside. We needed to look at this first.

Council stated they have written to Huxtable, Ruddle, Clews, Charlie Field, in 18 months they have had no reply. Has checked the letters have been received. Has also asked D. Ruddle to take our desire to discuss but the next thing we hear is low cost housing.

We do respond. Can only apologise.

The villagers have said they wanted it kept as open space. This has been mentioned at previous meetings. This is what was asked of D Ruddle. Should he not support us with our option a)?

D. Ruddle said – has given you options, i.e. looking at other options. There is no structure plan in Somerset. He has to look at the low cost housing and stated that Kingsdon's own survey demonstrated 109 votes in favor of affordable housing. Villagers need to look at Barton st David where low cost housing has been done well.

Question for D.Ruddle – does he have any current connections to the building trade. Is this not a declarable interest?

We have not been builders for 20 yrs.

I have been on meetings and heard that the housing needs survey shows the needs for 4 social housing in Kingsdon, and 4 in Keinton, but there would be 8 built in one location. You say no decisions have been made yet but I have heard this.

David H – a single plot for a luxury house is very expensive. As An authority we get very little for low cost housing, 10 houses would give us £60,000.

D.Huxtable then stated a need to leave soon to attend another meeting and returned to council to briefly discuss matters with the councilors, who asked questions.

The lease which has been given to the school. In the long term would it be the same? How will it be determined successful?

It will come down to the village. It will need a rent at some point.

If there is a village referendum and the village show a desire for keeping it. Will you respond to it? Look equally as sympathetically?

Yes, but this won't help me take it any further with needing a capital receipt.

If the school is not successful? If the playing field is already under development, we could have lost both?

No Comment.

Why can't we have temporary access? We have asked for access with a temporary lease?

I don't know. It is a SCC asset not the village asset.

I would like to make money on both sites but we have been generous by giving the school.

Would giving you the school help us to keep the field?

I can't answer that. But the school would not be big enough to do low cost housing. We would make more money on selling the school.

Could we not have a first offer before it went to anything else?

If the SSDC wish to use it for low cost housing, you will have chance.

If it's going to take some time can we not have a tenancy?

I don't know – can the clerk please put all these questions in a letter and I will respond.

David Ruddle and David Huxtable left the meeting at 8pm.

A number of parishioners asked for a referendum. It was then decided between councillors and parishioners to have a working party who can then hold a referendum. We need joined up thinking. There are some people that want field, some the shop, either in the school or somewhere else .

A parishioner requested the need for a better view on what on what the building may look like.

The following names volunteered for the working party and a meeting was arranged for Thursday 16th January.

Martin Singleton,
Douglas Higson,
Dave Morris,
Mike Windsor
Ben Carlisle
Richard South
Richard Hatt
Angie Saunders

Council asked the floor if we have we got the representation we need? The floor agreed this small group would met initially and then a probably further village meeting would be called shortly.

5.3 Kingsdon Centre and shop:

T.Masters enquired if there was a shop statement.

All that was reported was that the shop will be opening in the very near future.

6. Community Centre request for grant

The community centre made a further request funding, stating the following information:

The council have given £750 but at this time of setting the precept we would like to make a further request. There will be £350 of on-going costs a month for internet access, electricity, water etc.

With the funding we currently have a tenancy at will not a 25 yr lease. We would like to make it into a community centre. It is a public building. Until we have a full 25 yr lease we have fund raising issues. This is a project to bring the village together. We are not just throwing money at things. Consider before you set the precept some support towards the costs.

T.Masters asked what figure they were looking for and the request was for £100/£150 a month for the next 12months.

The councilors discussed making the following points:

The precept is public money.

We have been asking for a business plan which would have shown up these costs. The shop has said they wish to go it alone. They said the £750 would be it and they would have no further financial liability on the council (July 2013). If you receive funding from the parish council it is not giving the shop a proper trial period if extra money is being pumped into it. It has to be able to stand on its own two feet.

It has to show it is sustainable without constant top up money.

To date Council has still not seen a business plan, a maintenance schedule, structural survey costs or predicted running costs for that building.

Although the group says they don't need a business plan the Parish Council will need to see a convincing one if they are to give more funding to the project. There is no reason why one cannot be produced. It was a condition and requirement of releasing the initial £750.

Information gained via David Fisher- Plunkett foundation suggested that this is a small community to produce baseline viability figures on.

We have supported the shop with £750. There will be other projects that need support, we cannot keep pledging more and more money from public money without seeing a viable business plan or accurate cost projections.

A.Saunders then read the following:

When the school first became redundant a working group of villagers set themselves up to investigate and take on the project as a community centre. The Parish Council were asked by these villagers if it had any objection to this.

The only involvement from the Parish Council was to respectfully acknowledge this and allow them to proceed as a self-supporting community project. The input from the Parish Council would be nil and the overall responsibility would be nil. This included no nominated parish councillor on the working group.

If a councillor did decide to join the group then it would be in the capacity only of a parishioner/villager. This was to keep the project out of the Parish Council's domain.

The Parish Council asked for clear and meaningful updates to stay aware of what was being planned. Also it was requested that a business plan would need to be seen to enable the Council to gauge progress, make informed decisions on the projects viability. This information would provide a comfort level for the council to decide if (at their discretion) the council wished at any time to become more closely connected with the project or aid it in any way. The request for this information was a demonstration of support and awareness not a declaration of taking responsibility.

The Parish Council were subsequently approached with a request to put forward a sum of money to enable their project to continue. The Parish Council agreed that this single one off payment/donation would be made with no further financial involvement. It showed a sympathetic and well minded community support for the project and balanced the views of those villagers in support of the project and those who perhaps were not. However, this donation was not an indication that the Parish Council wished to become involved or enmeshed with the responsibility and proceedings leading to the setting up and running of the community centre.

Those running the project would be entirely responsible for all the financial aspects of the project which includes insurance.

To re-iterate the Parish Council have no responsibility regarding this matter and the school project team must cover their risks accordingly.

At this trial period stage the request for funding has been turned down.

7. Children's Play Area/Equipment

Mike Brown reported that the parish council have been offered £30,000 in grants. Now there is a budget, Mike will use the chronicle to see what people want, ideas from everyone. We have money to now have tree screening, dig down etc to help people's fears of what it will look like and positioning.

Mike will come back to the next meeting with a collation of the ideas and images of how it will look, e.g. the height will be no higher than it is now.

The issue of repair costs was raised. To cover this there is a 10 yr guarantee, some of the £30,000 can be used to look after it. The cost of inspection is a maximum of £80.

The grants were given for use at the Children's play area on the recreation field, the money can only be used for this purpose.

A parishioner asked if the grants could be used for other purposes or places. M. Brown informed him no. The article will go in the chronicle at the end of January. And hopefully agreed at the next meeting so it can be ready for spring/summer.

8. Request for grant to South Somerset citizens advice bureau.

A. Saunders explained that a brief discussion about this had occurred at a planning meeting where it had been suggested to donate £30. It needed to be formally agreed at this proper meeting.

It was proposed by A.Saunders to give £30, seconded by D.Morris. All were in favour.

9. Letter to prime minister regarding latest planning policy.

Another council has raised many concerns about planning policy and the effects it has on places like ours. The question was raised - Do we want to support them?

It was agreed we did need to respond especially in light of the previous field discussion.

Action: T Masters to write a letter in support of this to the prime minister.

10. SSDC plans impact on village.

At the moment there is no SSDC plan, it has been rewritten and is up for consultation.

With no plan in place at the moment we are at greater risk e.g. the council could easily get out of 106 money.

The rewritten plan needs to be looked at again carefully.

Action: All councilors to look at before the deadline. Clerk to check when the deadline is.

11. Safer Somerset partnership funding

The information on this scheme looking for applications was read out. It was agreed that Kingsdon does not currently have any issues for us to apply for.

T.Masters also mentioned a Victim support letter – this is to be carried forward to next meeting.

Action: Clerk to add to next meeting's agenda.

12. Cheque signing and financial report

12.1 Financial report

A.Saunders read the following report:

Balances are: general a/c £754.59, savings a/c £9430.74, this includes the grand sum of £1.46 interest, children's fund £4122.84.

Actual balances General £754.59 Savings £6830.74 the differences are earmarked to pay outstanding accounts and a number of cheques that have yet to be presented for payment.

I have to say that I was very surprised that the cheque to the Community shop group took so long to be presented - this was not done until 10th December having been issued in early November.

At the last meeting I informed the Council of my contact with HMRC about the VAT claim submitted by Sally (previous clerk). I followed this up by re submitting the claim. You may recall that HMRC informed me that they had not received that claim. On receipt of the re submitted claim, sent by recorded delivery, HMRC then asked me to use their correct form, which they would send to me. This arrived on 18th December, nearly a month after our conversation!

I now have to go back through all the papers to 2010 to find the Vat registration numbers of our suppliers and re-invent the wheel by re- writing the claim form previously submitted by Sally. Extremely time consuming as you can well imagine

I raised the question if I should include the Vat Claim from Nov 2012 to March 2013. It was suggested that I make a separate claim for this,

Now I know the procedure I will be ready to make our claim for the current sum of £126.43 for 2013-2014.

May I remind Council that a Vat refund is dependent on HMRC's approval of the submission.

12.2 Cheque signing

Cheque signing- paid out of Council:

Martin Singleton reimbursement for materials used to erect the new litter bin by the phone box -£17.08.

A.Saunders (on Council's behalf), publicly thanked Martin for carrying out this work.

£300 interim payment to Hannah Carlisle for the web site design

Cheques for signing Citizens Advice Bureau- £30; Viridor (from the Children's fund) £1020.40 to secure funding for the children's playground. This was previously agreed at the March 2013 meeting; Clerk January and February 2014 2 x £50

12.3 Precept

A. Saunders talked through the budget and setting of the precept for 2014/2015. £8000 was set as the precept.

M.Clode proposed the £8000 for the precept, seconded by D.Morris. All agreed.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.50 pm.